

THOUGHTS

ON THE

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PRESENT MANNER

OF

QUARTERING THE TROOPS

ON THE

C O A S T,

TO ASSIST THE

REVENUE OFFICERS;

AND ITS DEFECTS.

BY R. KELSALL,

Lieutenant in the 7th or (Queen's own,) Light Dragoons,

To which is added

A R E M A R K,

ON THE

D E F E C T I V E S Y S T E M

OF

DISCIPLINE of the CAVALRY, in this KINGDOM;

And a HINT for its IMPROVEMENT.

L O N D O N:

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THOUGHTS

PRESENT MANNER

QUARTERING THE TROOPS

OF THE

TO ASSIST THE

REVENUE OFFICERS

ERRATA.

In the Title Page, for Effects, read Defects.

Page 11, Line 2, for On the Service, read On that Service.

15, 23, after the Country a Comma.

19, 4, for Complaints, read Complaint.

25, 4, for 186, read 198.

26, 5, for 186, read 198.



30-11-87

ADVERTISEMENT.

IN the following paper I have shewn some ill conduct, in the position of the Dragoons, to afford aid to the Revenue Officers; and much inattention, on the part of Government, to the health of the corps, so placed. I have recommended a method of treatment, which has the approbation of the best medical professors, to preserve men so situate. I have also proposed officers to go out with parties, though sensible, it will meet the disapprobation of most Dragoon officers: but as the utility is not merely

ADVERTISEMENT.

merely a speculative idea, but the effect of experience, and a thorough conviction of its necessity, I am under less concern as to censure.

The hasty manner in which the following paper was wrote, I trust, will prevent criticism, as the benefit of the service was the object which determined the publication.

June 2, 1784.

THOUGHTS

ON THE

*Present Manner of Quartering the Troops
on the Coast to assist the Revenue Officers;
and its Effects.*

AS it is very probable that the military will be again made use of as an aid for the purpose of suppressing smuggling: and having had an opportunity of making some few observations on the mode of carrying on that duty, by the Light Cavalry; at the same time marking considerable neglects, and capital errors, not only in the quartering the troops; but also in the attention to their health, and the method of sending out
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detachments. I submit my thoughts to those who, from their situation in Administration, can effect a remedy.

It has been for a long time a custom, when a regiment is ordered on the coast duty, to put them into quarters, both by troops and detachments, in towns, and villages, close to the sea: which is the most impolitic thing that can be done; as most of the men who form the Light Dragoons, have been enlisted in Inland Counties: unaccustomed to the noxious, putrid, and damp air of marshy situations, as the Hundred of Essex, Romney Marsh, in Kent; Pevenley and Pett-Level, &c. in Suffex; the neighbourhood of Yarmouth, in Norfolk; Southwold and Blyborough, in Suffolk; not to mention many places in Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire, which they occupy while on that duty: the consequence of which is, they are soon seized with agues, fevers, and rheumatism; the constant companions of the Lowland inhabitants, and to which the poor soldier frequently falls a martyr,
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as I have very many times seen, when on the service. Dr. Buchan says, “ When the inhabitants of a high country remove to a low one, they are generally seized with intermitting fevers, and to such the disease is most apt to prove fatal.” What then must be the expectation of a soldier, who, in the execution of his duty, is exposed to the malignant vapours of stagnated waters, at all times and in all seasons; and whose pay is too small to afford him the means of getting that comfortable and necessary diet, to enable nature to resist the attack made on her by the unhealthiness of the atmosphere. These considerations ought to have weight with those, in whose power it is to mitigate the sufferings of others who have given themselves up to the service of the public. Besides the extreme folly of suffering men to remain in those places, the unhealthiness of which soon incapacitates them for the duty for which they were designed, when healthy inland positions would enable them to make more seizures

with greater certainty (as I shall shortly shew) besides the saving to the State, and service in the life of a good soldier.

It were needless to attempt to prove a circumstance so notorious, as that it is by no means an easy thing to form a good Light Dragoon, so much depending on the disposition and habit of the man, whose activity and aptitude for the service cannot be ascertained when enlisted, though his figure may be very promising. It behoves the State then to be more careful of the lives of that part of the army from necessity; if humanity for their fellow creatures, unfortunately communicates no weight. It remains then for me to shew the mode of remedying the evil recited; namely, by quartering the detachments a few miles within land.

No one is ignorant, that almost all smuggled goods are to be communicated to the tradesman of the metropolis, of necessity, therefore, must have land carriage; of course then, a line of troops placed in those towns and Hamlets, from

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ten to fifteen miles up the country, would be able to insure as many seizures, (and in my opinion more) than in the port towns, for in them each individual is disposed to the service of the smugglers, either from interest or fear; so as to render it next to an impossibility to get a party out undiscovered, by which means the seizures are seldom compleat, the advanced, or rear guard, being all that suffer, the main body with the best of the goods, escaping.

Now, as London is the center, to which they tend, the larger the circle of the quarters, the easier their passage to it; and the difficulty of making seizures increases, as the distance from the capital: for the nearer you are to the town, and the smaller the circle of the quarters, the greater is the difficulty of getting run goods bye, and the surer the seizures. This difficulty of passage being irremidable, and the chief market for smuggling goods being lost, that illicit practice would, of necessity, decay daily, supposing no other mode adopted.

Quarters

Quarters close on the shore must, of necessity, be distant from one another, agreeable to the position of the towns, as on some coasts from ten to fifteen miles: thus asunder, and having seldom good information, the smugglers with ease pass their goods between the quarters, but for fear of accidents, and to mislead, they generally send a small party with a few bags, near the quarters, which party is pursued and taken: the bulk of the goods, by this deceit, escaping safe, as designed.

I have been endeavouring, by the above, to shew a mode of suppressing the excess of smuggling goods into the capital, which receives all that are run on the Coasts of Hampshire, Sussex, Kent, Essex, and Suffolk, being the nearest shores. Goods run in Norfolk, Lincolnshire, and beyond, North, and Dorsetshire, &c. West, serve for the largest adjacent towns, excepting particular articles, which are so conveyed as to preclude possibility of discovery and interception.

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An advantage to be derived from quartering the Dragoons within land, is, that they may, on information of a large quantity of goods being lodged in a port town, suddenly pour themselves in and secure it: Whereas, if quartered there, the smugglers would avoid such depofite, and, by dividing the goods, escape seizure.

And as to the contraband trade, on the distant Northern and Western coasts, it is inconsiderable and only communicated to the nearest large towns, in which should be constantly kept a detachment of Dragoons equal to the capacity of the place. This, and parties going out, as I shall propose, would soon remedy that gross defrauding of the Revenue, which at present prevails.

Having never been in Scotland, I cannot speak as to the mode of conducting, the assistance to be given to the Revenue Officers there. As in all these things, the country disposition of its inhabitants, numberless local peculiarities,

ties, and other adventitious circumstances, are requisite to be known to enable one to judge properly.

Having just shewn the errors in the present manner of quartering the troops, I now come to pointing out the defects in attention to the health of the detachments placed as they hitherto have been, and which humanity says should be discontinued. By this attention I mean a provision to enable them to resist, as much as possible, the unhealthiness of the places in which they are obliged to remain: this might be done by allowing a small addition of pay to those parties in the marshes, (supposing Government determined on continuing the old quarters) to buy better provisions, and those necessaries which nature so situate require. At the same time Government should send to the regiment a quantity of tobacco, to be given out in proportion agreeable to the Colonel of the regiment, (being sufficient) who should be answerable for the wasting of it; also a quantity of bark the surgeon should

should receive, to administer as he may judge necessary. At present many an able man is lost for want of a timely administering of that most powerful medicine, the excessive dearth of which is superior to what the surgeon can afford; the above things allowed, and changing the sick men to healthier towns before the disease is fixed in the habit, would be attended with the most salutary effects; as I have seen in many instances where men indisposed have been sent to Head Quarters, which generally is a town within land, ten or fifteen miles, where they immediately recovered. I cannot strengthen my argument more than by the following passage from Vegetius, who says "An army should never continue any time in the neighbourhood of unwholesome marshes," and that the places mentioned come under that description, no person can deny; again, the same author adds, "The water must be wholesome, and not marshy; bad water is a kind of poison, and the cause of epidemic distempers. It is the

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duty of the officers of the legion, of the tribunes, and even the commander in chief himself, to take care that the sick soldiers are supplied with *proper diet*, and *diligently* attended by the physicians; for *little* can be expected from men, who have both the enemy and diseases to struggle with." To procure an attention to what the above quoted author has spoke so pointedly to, and thought of so much consequence, is the intent of this paper.

Head Quarters should be always a situation, as central as possible, of the cantonments; and the healthiest on account of the recruits, who, unaccustomed to the hardships of the profession, require more attention, and less exposure at first joining, till time has indurated them, in some degree, to the changes of heat, cold, damp, &c.

The advanced pay, tobacco and bark, to be discontinued on a regiment's leaving the coast. Any tobacco and bark remaining, to be given to the regiment succeeding, taking a receipt for the quantity.

tity. The saving to the state, in the suppression of smuggling, would render this expence unworthy notice.

The next cause of complaints, is the not sending out commissioned officers with parties, who might prevent the excessive drinking of spirits, as is practised at present, the revenue and non-commissioned officers setting an example: the pernicious effects of spirits, on an empty stomach, is notorious (and soldiers seldom have a full one,) besides, the love of liquor in them predominates so, as to render them totally regardless of ill consequences: the presence of an officer, who would restrain their intemperance, prevent their being bribed by the smugglers, and be a check on the conduct of the revenue officers, who are apt to harass the troops unnecessarily, and sometimes lead them wide of the smugglers route, with design, being in league. If to every party above seven private, a commissioned officer went out, seizures would be more certain, as from education and observation, the

party would be better conducted ; the command of a non-commissioned officer, at a distance from quarters, having little weight, and not many are to be trusted. Add to this, a subaltern would acquire coolness, and a knowledge, and judgement of countries be practised in intercepting parties, and insensibly, get some of that kind of spirit and conduct so essentially necessary in a partizan, which every officer of Light Cavalry ought to be. The duty of Light Dragoon officers on service being to surprise, perplex, harass, and perpetually annoy the enemy, which no man can do with success, unless he has accustomed himself to the knowledge of countries; is cool in his judgement and conduct; spirited and determined in the execution of his plans. The going out with parties, would habituate officers to caution and correctness of conduct, their own safety depending on their being continually on their guard, as the smugglers are always desperate determined fellows, and mostly inflamed with liquor. Another advantage arising to

to the service, from officers going with parties is, that they would see the horses properly attended to, and not suffer them to be neglected, as they are at present, without food, having marched, as I have frequently known, very rapidly between forty and fifty miles without halting, then tied up to a rail (perhaps without any attention for a considerable time) which treatment soon ruins them, and obliges the Colonel to cast those very horses, that, with proper care, would have served many years.

Add to this, the carelessness of the non-commissioned officers, to the parties, arms, and accoutrements, which every time they go out, are either lost or damaged, for want of attention and order.

And now having proposed so unprecedented a thing as detaching an officer with the parties, it becomes necessary to shew a benefit which should accrue to them, by going out, beside the knowledge mentioned, which *ought* to be an inducement; this is ten per cent. of all seizures

seizures made by them, which would indemnify them for their trouble, and clear them of any loss sustained on duty, and which ought to be esteemed a sufficient satisfaction, a true soldier being ever satisfied, in having served his King and country.

Having sufficiently spoken, of both officers and men; I must observe, that the port quarters are almost always bad and unfit for cavalry, the stabling is wretched in general, water fit to be given to a horse frequently scarce, straw indifferent, and hay very bad, being long marshy stuff, which sticks between their teeth, and does them infinite harm, so that unless you examine and cleanse their mouths every day, and pick the hay very nicely, they soon become mere skeletons, fit only for the kennel. In very few port towns is soft water, (the best to be given to horses) to be met with, spring water in wells being that in common use with the inhabitants; the only soft water they have, being saved in tubs, and which they will not permit the Dragoon

goon to use: besides, supposing the allowance of the use, the quantity would be insufficient, therefore, one cannot be surpris'd at the sudden change in the appearance of their horses.

I have known horses suffer very much by the hay, before the cause was discovered, when the inside of their mouths were so excoriated, as to make them refuse their corn unless softened; but this inconvenience, strict attention in the dragoon may remedy, and of these particulars the old quarter masters are well aware.

Having said much on the defect of placing cavalry on the shore, should Government be resolv'd on lining the coast: let them send infantry into the port towns, they will not want hay, straw, or water, but they will find sufficient to serve their purpose; the only quantity required, being for officers horses, may be got, and the regiments containing greater numbers of men, may be frequently changed on the appearance of any endemic complaint, or too great intimacy

intimacy with the inhabitants; besides, they can slip out unperceived, more readily than the dragoon, who has frequently his saddle, &c. to take out of the house to the stable, and by the time he is mounted, the whole town knows it; and perhaps he cannot then act, from the nature of the country, as I have often seen in Kent, Suffex, Suffolk, &c. nor are they by any means, so fit for preventing boats landing their goods, or forming ambushes among the rocks and narrow passages, as infantry; for take a dragoon off his horse, and he feels so awkwardly situated that he becomes of little or no use. Few regiments of dragoons that I have seen being good cavalry and infantry too, (as is the intent of dragoons) some colonels preferring excellence on horseback, others on foot; seldom you see a regiment complete in each exercise.

I proceed now to examine the strength of our establishment of dragoons, which I must aver is too low, and inadequate to the different occasions for which they are

are required. The numbers are eight regiments of Heavy, and five of Light Dragoons, each regiment of one hundred and eighty-six men. Now there are eight coast countries to cover, beginning only in Dorsetshire, and ending in Lincolnshire; allowing a regiment to each, there is eight regiments completely engaged out of the thirteen; then one Light on the King's duty, and one Heavy in Scotland, there remains but three for preserving the peace in the different manufacturing towns in the interior part of the kingdom; how far that number is sufficient, any person can judge; those kind of people being never to be kept in awe, and from committing disturbances, unless they conceive the military in the town, and adjacents, are sufficiently numerous to suppress their seditious assemblies if called on, and of their power, they are pretty accurate judges, as experience has shewn.

Having named the coast counties, which ought to have troops; I shall take Suffex for an instance, which in ex-

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tent from East to West is ninety miles, and leave every body to judge, how far that can be protected, and smuggling kept under by one regiment, consisting only of one hundred and eighty-six men, when an average has been taken of the sick, casualties, and wanting to complete; and they will acknowledge the insufficiency of numbers for the purpose: and, lest I should be thought to speak concerning the sickness of the troops without the weight of facts, I will mention what I saw in the year 1779. A troop of Heavy Dragoons, which went into quarters in Arundell, the latter end of June, by the end of September, out of forty men, had only three capable of tending their horses, and when the route came the beginning of October, there was only one man able to bear the trotting of his horse, many of them having the ague fit on, and obliged to halt every moment. What inducement Government could have for keeping them in that quarter, spite of repeated applications for removal

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val, when the men fell down daily, and before they were quite incapacitated, I cannot tell; however some died while in the quarter, and others after they moved, the disease being too fixed in the habit, to yield to any remedy that could be given; those who were not so far gone, mended immediately on the change of quarters. The same suffering, even to death, I have seen permitted on the different coasts of this island, before any notice has been taken of the unhealthy state of the regiments, though continually applied to. In support of my wishes, for the discontinuing quartering the troops in the Low-lands, near the sea, I refer you to Sir John Pringle's account of the diseases of the army in the Low Countries; the horrors of endemic diseases, incident to soldiers, is there fully shewn, which I wish was universally read, by those who have it in their power to relieve the present sufferers from similar complaints.

Lastly, I shall observe, that the com-

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mittee for inquiring into the frauds of the revenue, recommend the frequent changing the troops, to prevent a too great intimacy with the inhabitants of the port towns; such change to be made properly, is now impossible, the regiments being too small; it would have been possible, had the war establishment continued, or only a partial reduction taken place; increasing the peace establishment as their want has increased and requires it. A word on a reduction, that took place last year, and I have done; the difficulty of forming good cavalry, must be obvious to every sensible man, as there is not only the disposition of the man and his aptitude to learn, to be considered, but also the temper and capacity of the beast, whose ill disposition he must have to contend with; the fairest looking animal, being often by nature the most unfit. By the above reflection, I would wish people to weigh the too hasty reduction, (in my opinion) of three regiments of our Heavy Cavalry, which is the most difficult to
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form for service, and the want of which I think, would to their great distress be found, should a continental war happen, notwithstanding the assertion of a General in the House of Commons, who pledged himself, to charge at the head of a squadron of our Light Dragoons, any squadron of Heavy Cavalry the French could bring into the field, and break them; this supposing you knew exactly, the momentum of the French squadron, that your own was perfectly steady, well dressed, and capable of moving with a given velocity, exceeding that of the enemy, without confusing the ranks, might be possible; but take a squadron of our Light Dragoons from any regiment, accustomed to make desultory attacks, but never to make regular charges, (that kind of discipline being foreign to Light Cavalry, and destructive to their intent), and I have no doubt they would be broke, and dispersed instantly; various are the combinations, necessary to enable Light Cavalry to make a regular charge against
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Old Heavy; which only can be done, by making the momentum of the Light Horse, exceed the weight and velocity of the Heavy, but I have imperceptably strayed into the tactic of cavalry, which is foreign to my present design.

That some regulations should immediately take place, must be the wish of every humane individual, and the wish that I might be able in the smallest degree to contribute to, so necessary an alteration, overcame my reluctance of exposing this paper to the public eye, as knowing, that, possibly some ingenious person would improve on my remarks, to the great advantage of the service; my intent, at first, was to have entered more minutely into this subject, but reflecting, that much reading generates a tædium in many persons; and as I wished these hints to be seen by some, who from their stations can effect the design, though they from their official situations have little time to read; I determined to be thus concise, omitting entirely all mention of the quarters; I
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wish for the future, the dragoons should occupy, on marking some things necessary to be attended to by officers, while on the coast duty; an officer's duty at that time, (if he does it) being double, nearly to what it is in the inland quarters.

F I N I S.

A D D E N D A.

SINCE the first publishing of this Paper, several Bills have been passed for the more effectual prevention of Smuggling; which if we may venture to form a judgment of the advantages that will arise, from the effects already produced, I have no doubt the Revenue will be considerably benefited, though Smuggling will *not* be entirely suppressed.

I do not mean to condemn the Bill, I shall only observe, that, The “Act for the more effectual prevention of Smuggling, in this Kingdom,” will occasion the loss of many an Able Seaman; the doctrine of Non Resistance being what the Commander of a Smuggling Vessel cannot comprehend; their defence then is vigorous, the terms of engaging at Sea more equal; our loss proportionate: On Shore their powers

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of Resistance are very confined, being surrounded by their Goods, so as to prevent the free use of their Arms; and the disadvantage of defending themselves against mounted, disciplined, Men, acting under just Orders.

The number of Sailors lost to the State, within these few months, exceeds, I do really believe, the loss of Dragoons in as many Years; without acquiring the object of contest; by permitting the landing of the Goods you may (with conduct) almost insure the seizure, which is not to be done when the Capture is attempted at Sea; where possibly you must contend with the Elements also.

Respecting the Commutation Act, it has served to shew the intimate connexion of the Tea dealer and the Smuggler, before generally believed; now clearly elucidated.

The Men in confinement belonging to a Regiment now on the Coast duty evinces the necessity of exact order and method in the conducting parties, so as to prevent the non performance, or exceeding

ceeding of their duty ; which Mens zeal, may sometimes occasion. It is from small neglects or the esteeming of things trivial or of no immediate concernment, that the event has so frequently been of serious consequence, it were wiser to meet the disease than to let it arrive at its height, when “ *fero medicina paratur.*” the fatal effects having taken place.

And here I can with difficulty restrain myself from speaking, *particularly* of the present System of Discipline of the Cavalry ; but shall only remark “ that we neglect to teach our Soldiers to march well, and in good order ; to oppress their memories, with a number of complicated manœuvres, which are useless, and impracticable, on Service.*” Variety of manœuvres display a luxuriance of fancy for parade ; but were *ever* condemned by the greatest Men : who have led their Armies to the highest pitch of glory.

The attention to useless minutiae by imperceptible degrees contracts the mind,
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* Introduction De la Balme, Elemens de Tactique pour la Cavalerie.

and renders it incapable of conducting any great design, its powers being too confined to embrace the whole extent accustomed to minutiae. Minutiae is all it is capable of.

The Heavy and Light Cavalry should have their System of Discipline, fixed; formed upon the most approved, *useful* principle, no idle innovations, or manœuvres, the effect of false principles of Military science. All alterations, or additions, ought to be drawn out properly, in writing, plans, and plates annexed; with a distinct explanation of the *real* utility of the addition, or alteration, proposed; which should be presented to his Majesty, for his Royal approbation; which obtained; *then* to be practiced by all the Line of Heavy, or Light Cavalry: (whichsoever the improvement was designed for;) but not until then. This would prevent that inundation of *fancifull* movements which has nearly ruined the Cavalry. The co-operation of Heavy Cavalry, on Service, evidently proves the necessity of agreement of time
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and action with them, if you would wish to procure any given effect. Which cannot be, if their motions depend (as at present) on the Animal Spirits of the Commanding Officers, which vary as the degrees of comparison. At present, I shall not enter upon a physical discussion, of the above effect; suffice, that its influence should not extend to the disadvantage of the Service.

The advancement of Military knowledge in this Country is very slow; which reduces us, on many occasions, to the dangerous necessity of substituting Courage, to a degree of Rashness: for skill, being too impatient to acquire knowledge, and money answering the purpose in getting promotion, saves the fatigue of studying the Science de la Guerre.

*Kensington Barracks,
Feb. 24, 1785.*

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